## Rules of the Game
# Types and Templates (Part Two)
*By Skip Williams*

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Last week, we covered a few basic terms related to creature types. This week, we'll consider what creature types bring to the game and we'll review the creature types the game uses.

## Why Creature Types?

A creature type is something like a character's class because it establishes basics such as the size of the creature's Hit Dice, its saving throw bonuses, and the like. Previous versions of the **D&D** game lacked any formal system of creature types. As a result, monsters had a certain tiresome sameness. These early versions of the game also lacked any coherent way to talk about groups of monsters. In the days before creature types, a giant (at least in terms of its game statistics) wasn't much different from a dinosaur, and it was possible to argue endlessly about which monsters were, in fact, "giants."

The **D&D** game currently includes fifteen creature types. These types are explained in detail in the *Monster Manual* glossary, but here's a summary of what distinguishes one type from another. Keep in mind that -- like many things in the **D&D** game -- creature types are described in general terms rather than strictly defined (though a creature type description contains a considerable amount of hard game data). Assigning a type to a particular kind of creature is often a matter of choosing the type that fits it best.

- Aberration

These living creatures usually are downright bizarre looking, with a culture and individual powers to match. They generally rely on their special abilities rather than their physical powers in combat. Typical examples include the beholder and the mind flayer.

- Animal

These living creatures have low Intelligence scores (1 or 2 points). They might have extraordinary abilities, but no spell-like or supernatural abilities. Some animals are docile, but others can prove dangerous adversaries. Most animals are creatures you can find walking around in the world today, such as horses, lions, and whales. The game also includes animals from bygone eras, such as dinosaurs.

- Construct

These unliving creatures are artificially manufactured. They're often mindless and usually very tough. They lack Constitution scores, but gain extra hit points by virtue of their sheer mass.

A construct can be an unstoppable juggernaut in battle. Typical constructs include golems and animated objects.

- Dragon

Among the most powerful living creatures, dragons have a reptilian appearance, but are much more than mere

reptiles. Dragons are infamously tough and resilient, with an array of deadly natural weapons and usually formidable supernatural abilities as well.

The most familiar creatures of the dragon type are the chromatic and metallic dragons (also known as true dragons). Other creatures of this type include the wyvern and the dragon turtle. Any dragon is supremely confident and ferocious in battle.

- Elemental

Elementals are living creatures with bodies composed of one of the four classical elements (air, fire, earth, and water). Because an elemental's body is not composed of flesh and bone, it has many immunities and unusual abilities.

Elemental creatures include air, fire, earth, and water elementals, which are essentially just bits of living elemental matter, and more complex creatures such as belkers and invisible stalkers. Elemental creatures often rely on their mobility and sheer power in combat.

- Fey

Fey are living creatures with powerful connections to nature or to some other force or place. Fey creatures are somewhat fragile but very skillful and often imbued with magical powers.

Typical fey creatures include dryads and satyrs. Fey creatures usually live by their wits, both in combat and in their daily existences.

- Giant

Hulking living creatures with powerful humanoid bodies, giants are justly renowned for their indomitable strength. Most giants are size Large or even bigger, but they're even stronger than their sizes indicate. Many giants have brutish habits to go with their powerful bodies, but some giants are sensitive and intelligent.

The classic giant is the hill giant, a loutish and destructive creature nearly twice as tall as a human, but the giant type also includes the ogre mage, a cunning being with a bag of innate magical tricks, and the bizarre, two-headed ettin.

- Humanoid

Humanlike living creatures that usually lack natural weaponry and armor, humanoids nevertheless often prove formidable due to their equipment, learning, and social organization.

The type includes familiar player-character races such as humans, elves, halflings, and dwarves. The type also includes perennial foes such as goblins, orcs, and kobolds.

- Magical Beast

Magical beasts are creatures that often resemble animals, but with magical abilities, keen intellects, or both. Many magical beasts have bodies that combine seemingly mismatched elements, such as avian wings on a feline body.

The type covers a wide range of creatures from the ferocious griffon, to the elusive unicorn, to the massive roc.

Like predatory animals, magical beasts usually are well equipped for physical combat, but their Intelligence and special abilities make them even more dangerous foes.

Some people believe that any creature created in a magical process must be a magical beast, but this is not so. A magically created creature could be of any type.

- Monstrous Humanoid

Monstrous humanoids are living creatures that resemble humanoids, but with unusual bodies or unusual special powers or both.

Some monstrous humanoids are nearly indistinguishable from more ordinary humanoids, such as derro or the various hags. The type also includes some really odd-looking creatures, such as centaurs and medusas.

Monstrous humanoids are as clever and socially well adapted as humanoids, but their unusual bodies or powers give them an extra edge.

- Ooze

These creatures are alive, but often only on the most rudimentary level. Oozes generally have formless bodies made of elementary protoplasm and most are mindless. They simply slither about and try to engulf anything they find that might be even remotely edible.

Typical oozes include gelatinous cubes, black puddings, and ochre jellies.

Oozes usually aren't clever opponents, but their primitive bodies make them resistant to many kinds of attacks and they can prove exceedingly difficult to defeat.

- Outsider

Outsiders are living creatures that have some connection to a plane other than the Material Plane. An outsider might have a body composed (or partly composed) of the essence of its home plane, or its connection might be more spiritual than physical. Outsiders have excellent skills, saving throws, and attack capabilities, and they usually have a battery of magical powers as well.

Outsiders vary widely, from the fairly humanlike genies to the alien ravid and xorn.

- Plant

These living creatures have vegetable bodies and minds. Many plant creatures are fully mobile and also are capable of conversing or negotiating with other creatures. Others are barely mobile at all (or even sessile), and simply wait for prey. Because they lack internal organs and circulatory systems, plant creatures of any kind usually prove difficult to kill.

Plant creatures range from the philosophical (though formidable) treant to the animalistic shambling mound to the immobile shrieker.

- Undead

These unliving creatures were once alive, but now have a new existence as undead. They generally fall into two categories. Corporeal undead retain the bodies they had when alive, at least in some form. Incorporeal undead have lost (or shed) their bodies and exist as disembodied spirits. Incorporeal undead always have the incorporeal subtype.

Some undead are mindless and function as mere automatons. Other undead are wickedly clever. Because they're not alive, undead creatures lack Constitution scores, which tends to limit their hit points in spite of their 12-sided Hit Dice. A lack of Constitution, however, also provides undead with a host of immunities.

Misconceptions about undead creatures abound. For example, undead creatures see and hear pretty much just like other sorts of creatures do. They aren't imbued with any sort of special sense that allows them to note unseen things or creatures. Exactly how an undead creature sees and hears isn't revealed in the rules, but then again there are lots of other things about undead creatures that the rules don't reveal, such as how they manage to move around. When in doubt about what an undead creature can do, check out the discussion of the undead creature type on page 317 in the *Monster Manual.*

- Vermin

These living creatures are mindless and also invertebrates. They can include fairly normal creatures such as ants, spiders, and wasps and monstrously big versions of the same sorts of creatures. Despite the type's name, rodents, snakes, and other vertebrates are animals, not vermin, no matter how icky and wiggly those creatures might be.

**When a Creature's Type Changes**

Some changes in a creature's type are temporary, such as when a spellcaster uses a *shapechange* spell to assume another creature's form and type. Most changes in type, however, are more or less permanent, such as when a human character becomes a 20th-level monk and gains the outsider type (while losing his original

humanoid type).

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**From page 42 of** *Player's Handbook***:**

**Perfect Self:** At 20th level, a monk has tuned her body with skill and quasi-magical abilities to the point that she becomes a magical creature. She is forevermore treated as an outsider (an extraplanar creature) rather than as a humanoid for the purpose of spells and magical effects. For instance, *charm person* does not affect her. Additionally, the monk gains damage reduction 10/magic, which allows her to ignore (instantly regenerate) the first 10 points of damage from any attack made by a nonmagical weapon or by any natural attack made by a creature that doesn't have similar damage reduction (see Damage Reduction, page 291 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). Unlike other outsiders, the monk can still be brought back from the dead as if she were a member of her previous creature type.

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A change in type indicates a major alteration in a creature's biology, psychology, or both.

**The** Augmented Subtype**:** Whenever a creature loses its original type in favor of a new one, it gains the augmented subtype, which is always paired with the creature's original type. For example, a human who gains the outsider type through the monk class becomes an outsider (augmented humanoid); Part Four contains a longer discussion of class-induced changes in type.

Adding the augmented subtype to a creature serves a number of purposes. First, it provides a reminder of the creature's history and true ancestry. Second, a creature with the augmented subtype retains the features from its original type, but it often has the traits from its assumed type (see page 306 in the *Monster Manual*). This tends to make changing a creature's type easier to handle because features from a type affect many of a creature's basic game statistics. See the descriptions for creature types in the *Monster Manual* glossary for the list of traits and features that go with each type.

**Class Abilities:** A change in type usually does not affect the class levels a creature has. That is, any Hit Dice, skills, class features, saving throw bonuses, attack bonuses, or other benefits a creature gains from being a member of a class usually do not change when a creature's type changes.

There are some obvious exceptions; for example, when a change in type also entails the loss of the mind, it's a good bet that most class benefits also will be lost. Likewise, a change type paired with a change in alignment that violates a class alignment restriction will interfere with the benefits the class provides. It's also possible that a change in type might render a class feature irrelevant or unusable. For example, a druid's resist nature's lure class feature becomes irrelevant if the druid's creature type changes to undead because undead creatures are immune to mind-affecting effects.

Some templates work retroactive changes in a creature, including Hit Dice from a class. For example, the lich template makes a creature's class Hit Dice into 12-sided dice. See Part Three for more about templates.

**What's Next?**

We're out of time for this week. Next week, we'll consider a few ways a creature's type can change.

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**About the Author**

**Skip Williams** keeps busy with freelance projects for several different game companies and was the Sage of *Dragon* Magazine for many years. Skip is a co-designer of the **D&D** 3rd Edition game and the chief architect of the *Monster Manual*. When not devising swift and cruel deaths for player characters, Skip putters in his kitchen or garden (rabbits and deer are not Skip's friends) or works on repairing and improving the century-old farmhouse that he shares with his wife, Penny, and a growing menagerie of pets.

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